

VZCZCXYZ0000
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHGT #0387 0881503
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 281503Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5051
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO IMMEDIATE 4795
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHMCSUU/FBI WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEABND/DEA HQS WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 000387

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 27/03/2018
TAGS: [KCRM](#) [SNAR](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [KJUS](#) [KDEM](#) [GT](#)
SUBJECT: GUATEMALAN NARCO-GUNFIGHT HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR
REGIONAL SECURITY COOPERATION

Classified By: Ambassador James M. Derham for reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (U) Summary. A shootout involving Mexican and Guatemalan narcotraffickers in Zacapa left eleven dead and two more wounded on March 25. Initial DEA and NAS reports confirm that members of the Mexican gang "Los Zetas" participated in the shootout that resulted in the death of Guatemalan major trafficker Juan Leon Ardon, alias "El Juancho." Currently, the Guatemalan National Police (PNC) have three Mexican and three Guatemalan men in custody whom they claim have ties to Los Zetas. This brazen attack represents an escalation of violence by Mexican cartels in Guatemala and illustrates the importance of a regional approach to fighting drug trafficking. End Summary.

12. (U) In the early afternoon of March 25, there was a major firefight in the parking lot of a hotel on the highway to the Atlantic Coast between members of the Guatemala-based Juan Jose Leon Ardon drug trafficking Organization and the Los Zetas Organization from Nuevo Laredo, Mexico. Eleven are confirmed dead, including Zacapa cartel leader Juan Jose Leon Ardon ("El Juancho") and his brother Hector Enrique Leon Chacon.

13. (C) The joint Guatemalan/DEA Task Force conducted interviews with local police authorities at the crime scene immediately following the gunfight. PNC officials informed the Task Force that shortly after the gunfight Guatemalan cartel leader Waldemar Lorenzana and members of the Leon family arrived at the scene and took custody of the bodies of Leon Ardon and Leon Chacon and set fire to Leon Ardon's vehicles. According to local press reports, six M-16s, five 9 mm handguns, two grenade launchers, and 460 bullet casings at the crime scene. There were also reports that an RPG7 anti-tank weapon was used during the gunfight.

14. (C) The PNC captured and detained three Mexicans and three Guatemalans fleeing the scene whom they believe are linked to Los Zetas. Among those captured was Mexican Roberto Rodriguez Cardenas (alias "El Bebe," associated with Miguel Angel Trevino Morales of the Gulf Cartel in Mexico).

15. (C) Comment: Guatemalans have been shocked by this brazen attack by Mexican trafficking organizations inside Guatemala, and press commentary focused on the potential for Guatemala to become increasingly enmeshed in Mexican narco-violence. DEA sources suggest that this attack could signal a possible move by Mexican drug trafficker Trevino Morales to take control of Central American drug trafficking, specifically in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. It highlights the need for regional security cooperation under the Merida Initiative to confront threats that are increasingly crossing borders.

